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7-1-2015

Review of "The Scholarly Kitchen," by David Crotty

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Recommended Citation

Holley, R. P. (2015) Review of "The Scholarly Kitchen," by David Crotty. *Collection Management*, 40(3), 185-186. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01462679.2015.1050938>

Available at: <http://digitalcommons.wayne.edu/slisfrp/141>

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The Scholarly Kitchen. <http://scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org/>. Sponsored by the Society for Scholarly Publishing. David Crotty, Executive Editor.

The Scholarly Kitchen is a blog distributed each weekday by the Society for Scholarly Publishing. To quote from its Web site, the Society established the blog in February 2008 to:

1. Keep SSP members and interested parties aware of new developments in publishing
2. Point to research reports and projects
3. Interpret the significance of relevant research in a balanced way (or occasionally in a provocative way)
4. Suggest areas that need more input by identifying gaps in knowledge
5. Translate findings from related endeavors (publishing outside STM, online business, user trends)
6. Attract the community of STM information experts interested in these things and give them a place to contribute

The blog officially has fourteen “chefs” to serve up their daily dish of enlightening commentary. The current Executive Editor is David Crotty, Senior Editor with Oxford University Press’ journal publishing program, who took over from Kent Anderson, the blog’s founder, in 2013. The diversity of the contributors is one of the blog’s greatest strengths. The bloggers are a virtual who’s who of scholarly communication with representatives from society publishers, government agencies, academic libraries, consultants, and commercial publishers. Rick Anderson, Marriott Library, University of Utah, represents the library community; he is a well-known and out spoken collection development librarian who relishes espousing the library viewpoint in provocative ways.

This multiplicity of viewpoints increases the blog's value since the writers can't develop a culture of group think and/or preaching to the choir. The authors get to choose their subjects independently and do not represent the Society for Scholarly Publishing or their employers. In fact, it seems that being a chef requires having a supportive employer or being independent enough to be able to write stimulating and confrontational posts. Attacking conventional wisdom, questioning strategies, and examining the validity of studies makes for provocative reading. As an added bonus, the moderated comments section is sometimes more interesting than the initial blog post. Comments can lead to lengthy discussions that are devoid of the ad hominem attacks found in too many blogs. The original chef usually responds to the meatier reader comments.

Finding the latest columns collectively or by an individual chef is easy via the Web site or simple Google search. The results also list the number of comments, a fact that gives some indication of topic's popularity or the controversial nature of the posting. To give a taste of the topics, I particularly like the following columns from February 2015: Central Casting — The Funding Problems We're Baking Into the Future of Scholarly Publishing (Anderson); What Would It Cost to Buy Everything? (Esposito); Outliers and the Importance of Anonymity: Usage Data Versus Snooping on Your Customers (Jones); and How Might Scholarly Communication Benefit from Net Neutrality? (Carpenter).

I have a few caveats. For those interested in only library matters, *The Scholarly Kitchen* is not a library blog. It deals with the broader issues of scholarly communication, most of which have at least some importance for libraries. The blog will help librarians understand how the system works but only rarely deal with library operations. Second, much of the discussions center on the STEM fields (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Medicine) because that is where the

money is. As a Humanities PhD, I wish that *The Scholarly Kitchen* would include a designated expert for the less prosperous Humanities and Social Sciences. I believe that faculty in those areas have suffered the most from the changes in scholarly communication since the arrival of the Internet for many reasons including declining enrollments, the need for university presses to sell more copies, and the arrival of big deals. Their voice would add an interesting flavor to the blog.

To sign up for the daily offering, the “subscribe” button is found on the upper right of each page or can be accomplished by clicking a box when posting a comment. As with all blogs, some postings will be more interesting than others; but the chefs of *The Scholarly Kitchen* provide more than enough meat to nourish a better understanding of intricacies and current trends of scholarly communication.

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